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C E R T A I N
Cases of Conscience
R E S O L V E D,
Concerning the
Lawfulness of Joyning
W I T H
Forms of Prayer
I N
Publick Worship.

P A R T I.

V I Z.

- I. Whether the using of Forms of Prayer, doth not stint and limit the Spirit.
 - II. Whether the using Publick Forms of Prayer be not a sinful omission of the Ministerial Gift of Prayer.
 - III. Whether Praying by a Publick Form doth not deaden the Devotion of Prayer.
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L O N D O N :

Printed by *Henry Hills, Jun.* for *Fincham Gardiner* at
the *White Horse* in *Ludgate-street*, 1683.

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A Continuation and Vindication of the Defence of Dr. *Stillingsfleet's* Unreasonableness of Separation, in Answer to Mr. *Baxter*, and Mr. *Lob*, &c.

A Perswasion to Communion with the Church of *England*.

A Resolution of some Cases of Conscience, which Respect Church-Communion.

The Case of indifferent things, used in the Worship of God, Proposed and Stated by considering these Questions, &c.

A Discourse about Edification.

Considerations of present use, considering the Danger Resulting from the Change of our Church-Government.

The Resolution of this Case of Conscience, *Whether the Church of England's Symbolizing so far as it doth with the Church of Rome, makes it Unlawful to hold Communion with the Church of England?*

A Letter to *Anonymus*, in Answer to his Three Letters to Dr. *Sherlock* about Church-Communion.

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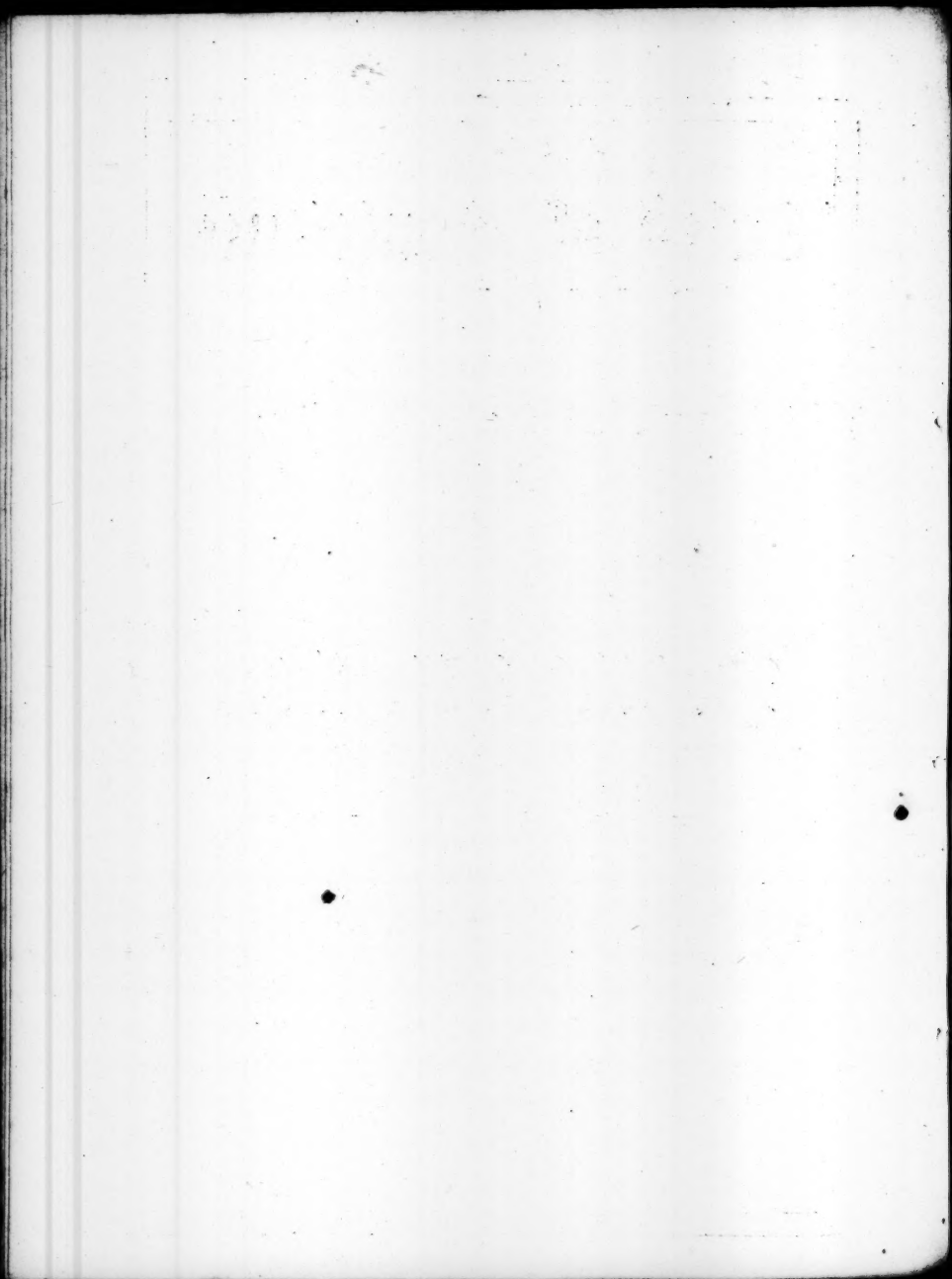
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A
RESOLUTION
OF THE
Cases of Conscience,

Which concern the Use of

FORMS of PRAYER.

ONE of the main Points which our dissenting Brethren insist on to justify their Separation from our Church, is, That our Publick Worship is perform'd in a Form of Words of Man's Invention; which, they conceive, is unlawful; for hereby, say some of them, the Holy Spirit, who inspires our Prayer, is stinted and limited, and hereby the Gift of Prayer, say others, which the Holy Spirit communicates to Ministers, to enable them to express the Devotions of their Congregations to God, is rendered useless; and not only so, but even the Devotions of the Congregation too are mightily deaden'd, by being continually express'd in the same form of words: besides, that the wants of Christians being various, casual, and emergent, cannot be so fully represented

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presented in a fixt Form, as in conceiv'd Prayers, which upon the account of their variation in Expressions, may be the better extended to the continual variations of Mens cases and circumstances: besides all which, say they, we have no warrant for the use of Forms, either in Scripture, or pure Antiquity; and if we had, yet an universal imposition of them, can by no means be lawfully compli'd with: this, according to the best recollection I can make, is the sum of what our Brethren urge against the lawfulness of joyning with us in a stated Liturgy, or Form of Publick Worship: and therefore, in order to the satisfying their Consciences in this matter, I shall reduce their whole Plea to these following Cases, and endeavour a plain and clear resolution of them.

1. *Whether Praying in a Form of Words, doth not stint or limit the Spirit of Prayer?*
2. *Whether the Use of Publick Forms of Prayer, be not a sinful neglect of the Ministerial Gift of Prayer?*
3. *Whether the constant Use of the same Form of Prayer, doth not very much deaden the Devotion of Prayer?*
4. *Whether the common wants of Christian Congregations may not be better represented in conceiv'd Prayer, than in a Form of Prayer?*
5. *Whether there be any warrant for Forms of Prayer, either in Scripture, or pure Antiquity?*
6. *Whether, supposing Forms to be lawful, the imposition of them can be lawfully compli'd with?*

Case I.

Whether Praying in a Form of Words, doth not stint and limit the Spirit of Prayer ?

In order to the resolution of this Case, it will be necessary to explain first, what it is that the Scripture attributes to the Spirit in Prayer ; and secondly, what is meant by stinting or limiting the Spirit in Prayer.

1. What is it that the Scripture attributes to the Spirit in Prayer ? I answer, there are some things attributed to him which were extraordinary, and temporary ; and others that are ordinary, fixt, and standing : The through state and distinguishing of which will very much contribute to the resolution of this present Case, and therefore I shall insist more largely upon it.

First, I say there are some things attributed to the Holy Spirit in this matter of Prayer which were extraordinary and temporary ; and that was the immediate Inspiration of the matter of Prayer, together with an ability to express and utter it in known or unknown Languages : thus as for the immediate inspiration of the matter of Prayer, we read in the Old Testament of Prayers and Praises, which, upon special occasions, were immediately indited by Divine Inspiration : for so when *Hannah* presented her Son to the Lord in *Shiloh*, the Text only saith, that she praid, and said ; but the *Targum* paraphrases it, that she praid by the Spirit of Prophecie, and accordingly praying and praising by immediate inspiration, is frequently call'd prophesying : So 1 Sam. 10. 5. *The Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesie ;* that is, as Expositors generally interpret it, thou shalt utter Spiritual Psalms and Hymns by immediate in-

spiration on the place ; and to the same purpose is the word used *Numb. 11. 25. 1 Chron. 25. 1.* and accordingly in the New Testament it is said of *Zacharias*, *that he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, blessed be the Lord God of Israel, &c.* The matter of all which Prayers and Praises, together with those in the Book of *Psalms*, and sundry others recorded in Scripture, was immediately dictated to those inspir'd persons by the Holy Ghost, and deliver'd by them without any recourse to their own invention or consideration, though as to the words of them, it may be justly question'd, whether they were not left to their own composure, as it seems very probable, the words of all other inspirations were ; for considering how the inspired persons differ'd in their stile, according as they differ'd in their education, in their natural parts, and intellectual improvements, it is very likely they themselves composed and worded their own inspirations, the Spirit of God taking care only so to oversee and direct them, that their words might not misrepresent their matter ; and if so, how much less reason have we to suppose, that the Spirit inspires the words of our Prayers : but this I shall not insist on.

However, after that great descent of the Holy Ghost at *Pentecost*, wherein the Gift of Tongues was communicated to enable the first Planters of the Gospel, to propagate it through the World, it's certain that not only the Matter of their Prayers, but even the very Language too in which they express them, was immediately inspired, insomuch that they were not only enabled to Pray upon the place in apt and fluent Expressions, but also to Pray in Languages, which they never understood before, and which even then they understood but very imperfectly, and also to interpret those

those Prayers into the vulgar Language, which themselves or others had utter'd in unknown Tongues; and this, among others, the Apostle calls a Spiritual Gift, 1 Cor. 12. 1. which, as I remember, is the only place where the Gift of Prayer is mention'd in Scripture: and in 1 Cor. 14. 14. it is also call'd a Spirit, where he gives us an account at large of this miraculous way of praying.

Now that this miraculous Gift of praying in, and interpreting Prayers out of unknown Tongues was extraordinary, and temporary, and peculiar to the Primitive Ages of Christianity, is evident, because the design of it was not only to enable the first Planters of the Gospel to perform their Ministerial Office in the vulgar Languages of the several Nations they were sent to, but also to be a sign from God, as all other Miracles were, for the confirmation of the Gospel; for so the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. 14. 22. *That Tongues were for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not*: and therefore since it's granted of all hands, that the Gift of Miracles was extraordinary, and intended only for a demonstration of the Gospel to the Infidel World, and after that to cease, there can be no doubt but this miraculous Gift of Prayer was so too.

But that the Spirits inditing the Matter, and, if you will, the words of those inspired Prayers, was also extraordinary, will require a larger proof; because it is look'd upon by many of our dissenting Brethren as an ordinary and standing Gift, which the Spirit doth and will communicate to all successive Ages of the World. Against this Opinion of theirs therefore I shall briefly offer these following Reasons to their consideration:

1. That

1. That there is no promise of any such Gift, and therefore no reason to expect the continuance of it. For whatsoever standing and ordinary benefits we receive from God, we receive them by vertue of the New Covenant, in which he hath promised to us all those good things which we can reasonably expect at his hands; and the promise of God being the only foundation of our hope, it is presumption to promise our selves what he hath not promised us: but now in all the New Covenant we have not the least intimation of any such promise, viz. That the Spirit will immediately indite to us the Matter and Expressions of our Prayers; For as for that of *Zachary 12. 10.* which is the only promise that is pretended in the case, it's evident, at first sight, that it's nothing to the purpose; *I will pour out upon the Inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of Grace and Supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierc'd, and they shall mourn.* What is all this to the immediate inspiration of the Matter and Expressions of our Prayer, when it's plain, that the Spirit of Supplication here is the same with the Spirit of Grace, or of inward Piety and Devotion? even as the following words imply, *and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn:* that is, for their horrid sin of crucifying me. But that there is no such promise in the New Covenant is evident, from what is acknowledged of all hands, viz. That there are many good Christians who could never pretend to any such inspiration, who are some of them fain to be beholding to their own recollection and invention for the Matter and Words of their Prayers, and others, for want of a sufficient quickness of invention, to be beholding to Forms of Prayer of other mens composure; neither of which they need, were they immediately inspir'd: And I am very confident
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'twould be look'd upon by all sober Dissenters as a very rash and unjust censure to affirm, that a man cannot be a good Christian, who doth not pray by immediate inspiration, but is always fain to depend either on his own invention, or a Form of Prayer for the Matter and Expressions of his Devotions: and if so, how can this consist with a standing promise of immediate inspiration of Prayer in the New Covenant? unless we will suppose that there are Blessings promised in the New Covenant, to which good Christians may have no right or title, and of which they may never actually partake, which is utterly to destroy the nature of the Covenant, which extends to all who perform the conditions of it, and to cut off all our dependance upon it.

2. That as there is no promise, so there is no need of any such immediate inspiration. 'Tis true, Christ hath promised by his Spirit, to be with us to the end of the World, and assur'd us, that he will give his Spirit unto every one that asks, and to what end hath he promised this, but only to supply our Necessities, and enable us to perform those Duties, which, through our own impotency, we cannot perform without him? for so he argues from the readiness of Parents, to supply their Children with what is necessary to their bodily life and subsistence, to the readiness of God to bestow his Spirit (that is to all the purposes that are necessary to their Spiritual Life, as the parallel plainly implies) upon them that ask him. So that all we can expect by vertue of these promises is only this, That the Spirit of God will be ready to aid and assist us in all those necessary cases, wherein our Duty and Spiritual Life is concern'd; and therefore if there be no necessity of an immediate inspiration of either Matter or Words to enable us to Pray, it is an unwarrantable presumption
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to expect it by vertue of these or such like promises.

And that there is no necessity, I conceive, is very apparent; for,

First, As for the Matter of our Prayers, the Holy Spirit hath already sufficiently reveal'd it to us in the Gospel, and as plainly instructed us what we are to pray for, as he can be suppos'd to do by any immediate inspiration: so that with a very little consideration, we may thence easily recollect what it is that we need, and what we are warranted and commanded to pray for; and for a summary of the whole, we need go no further than our Churches Catechism, which in answer to that Question, after the Lord's Prayer, *What desirest thou of God in this Prayer?* sums up the whole matter of our Prayer in a few, plain, and easie words. And to suppose, after such a clear revelation of the matter of Prayer, a necessity of immediate inspiration of it, is in effect to suppose, that we have neither reason enough to understand the sense of plain words, nor memory enough to retain and recollect it. But against this, that passage of St. Paul is objected by our Brethren, *Rom. 8. 26. We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit it self maketh intercession for us with groanings, which cannot be utter'd.* From which words, *We know not what to pray for as we ought,* they infer, that how plainly soever the matter of Prayer is reveal'd to us, we cannot in all cases know what it is without an immediate inspiration: which must either suppose, that all matter of Prayer is not plainly reveal'd to us, or that though it be, we cannot understand it; whereas the Apostles words imply neither the one nor t'other, for it's plain those words, *we know not what to pray for,* are not to be understood simply, but with reference to, *as we ought*; καὶ ὁ πνεῦμα βοᾷ

καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἵκανον, for what to pray for as we ought, we know not ; which plainly refers to the manner, and not to the matter of our Prayer, how to pray for any thing with that fervency of desire, that dependance upon, and resignation to God, as we ought, of our selves, we know not without the assistance of the Spirit of God ; if therefore the Spirit hath already sufficiently reveal'd to us, what the matter of Prayer is, (as he must be suppos'd to do, if the Scriptures be sufficient) I see no necessity why he should reveal it again by immediate inspiration ; and if there be no necessity of it, I know no warrant we have to expect it : But then,

2. As for the Words of Prayer, by which we are to express the Matter of it, what necessity can there be that these should be immediately dictated to us, when as if we have not quickness enough of fancy and invention to express our wants and desires in our own words, we may readily supply that defect by Forms of Prayer of other Mens composure, which with very short additions and variations of our own, we may easily adapt to all our particular cases and circumstances? and to imagin that with such helps and assistances we cannot word our desires to God without an immediate inspiration, is to suppose, that we are meer whispering Pipes, that can breath out nothing but what is breath'd into us.

3. That as there is neither promise, nor need of any such immediate inspiration of Prayer, so there is no certain sign or testimony of it remaining among us : whenever God inspir'd men with Divine matter and words, his way was always to attest the divinity of their inspiration with some certain sign by which themselves, and others, might be well assur'd of it ; and though at this distance from the inspired Ages we cannot certainly determin by what token it was that

the Prophets knew the divinity of their own inspirations while they were seiz'd with them ; yet this we know, that after they were deliver'd of them , God always took care to attest them by some miraculous operation : for so Miracles are stiled by the Apostle, the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, as being the constant signs and tokens of Divine inspiration ; and indeed without such signs to distinguish it from false pretences, we were better be without inspiration, than with it, because we shall be left under an unavoidable necessity, either of admitting all inspirations which pretend to be divine, or of rejecting all that are truly so : as to instance in this case of Prayer, we know 'tis possible for men to have the matter and words of it dictated to them by a natural, or Diabolical, as well as a Divine Enthusiasm, and therefore it is highly requisit if such Divine Enthusiasm, or Inspiration, be continu'd to us, that the proper signs and testimonies of it should be continu'd too, that so we may be able to distinguish that which is divine, from that which is natural or diabolical ; otherwise we must either conclude them all to be natural, or diabolical, or believe them all to be divine, and entertain them accordingly.

If you say there is no need of either, because the Scripture is sufficient to distinguish them ; I answer, that though the Scripture may be sufficient to distinguish the matter of the inspiration, whether it be true or false, yet it is not sufficient to distinguish the inspiration it self, whether it be divine, or natural, or diabolical : For

First, As for natural Enthusiasm, it is not at all impossible for a man to pray agreeably to Scripture by natural inspiration, by which I mean a natural or accidental fervency of temper, arising either from a
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constant heat of constitution, or a casual agitation of the spirits, occasion'd either by vapours of heated melancholy, or an intermixture of sharp and feaverish humours with the blood; which as all men know, who understand any thing of the nature and composition of humane bodies, naturally heightens and impregnates the fancy, and causes the images of things to come faster into it, and appear more distinct in it, and consequently produces a very ready invention of matter and extraordinary fluency of words: so that if under a fit of this natural fervency, a man's fancy happens to run upon God and Religion, he cannot fail to pray with great readiness and fluency, and sometimes with that extraordinary passion and enlargement, as shall cause him assuredly to believe himself immediately inspired by the Spirit of God: of the truth of which, instances enough might be given not only among Christians, but also among the Devoto's of *Mahomet*, and the Poets and Orators of the Heathens, whose fancies have been very often so strangely exalted by the fervour of their temper, or disease, that not only they themselves, but they that heard them, believed that they were inspired by God. Supposing then, that under a fit of this natural Enthusiasm a man should pray agreeably to Scripture, how shall he be able to know by Scripture whether the present inspiration he is under, be natural, or divine? and how will it be possible for him to avoid, many times, attributing the natural effects of his temper, or disease, to the immediate operation of the Spirit of God?

But you will say, we all agree that the Spirit of God inspires good men with holy and fervent affections in their Prayers, and yet it cannot be deni'd that this fervency of affection doth sometimes also proceed from the present temper of our bodies, notwith-

standing which, we have no other sign or testimony besides that of Scripture, whereby to distinguish when 'tis divine, and when natural; doth not therefore the want of such sign as effectually conclude against the Spirits inspiring the fervour of our Prayers, as against his inspiring the matter and words of them? I answer, no; For, as for the former, we have a sure word of promise, which we have not for the latter; and therefore if we can claim the promise, we have just reason to conclude when we feel our affections actually excited, that how much soever other causes might contribute to it, the Holy Spirit was the principal cause; but where we have no promise, we have no ground for such conclusion: besides which, we have no such need of signs to enable us to distinguish in the one case, as in the other; For as for the inspiration of affection, we may easily distinguish whether it be natural or divine, by our own sense; if our present fervour be accompanied with a fixt and constant devotion of soul, we may certainly conclude, that the same Spirit which inspired the one, inspired the other; and whether it be so accompanied or no, that natural sense and feeling we have of our own motions and affections, will quickly inform us, and we have no more need of an outward sign to satisfy us in this matter, than we have to know whether we are hungry or thirsty: but if the present fervour of our affections in Prayer be only a sudden fit and pang of devotion, that finds and leaves us habitually indeavour, we have just reason to conclude, that 'tis intirely owing to our present bodily temper: whether therefore our affections in Prayer are inspired by God, our own sense will inform us, if we impartially consult it; but whether our matter and words are so, no sense we have can resolve us: we may feel the matter of our Prayer pour in
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upon us with extraordinary readines, and be inabled to pour it out again with extraordinary fluency, and yet all this may proceed from our own fancy and invention, quickned and enlarg'd by meerly natural Enthusiasm; and therefore, unless we had some other sign, besides that of Scripture, 'twill be impossible for us to distinguish between a divine and natural inspiration of matter and words, because that which is natural, may be as agreeable to Scripture, as that which is suppos'd to be divine; and God hath given us no inward sense to distinguish between one and t'other: and can it be imagin'd that had he meant to continue this Gift of inspiration to us, he would have thus left us in the dark concerning it, without any certain sign whereby we might distinguish, whether it be from his Spirit, or from an ill-affected Spleen, or a Fever?

But then, secondly, as for Diabolical Inspirations of Matter and Words in Prayer, we have sundry very probable Instances, such as Major *Weir*, who is said to have received his Inspirations through a Staff, *Hacket*, *David George*, and that Monster of wickedness, *John Bafilides Duke of Russia*, who were all of them possess'd with such a wonderful Gift of Prayer, as did not only charm and ravish those that heard them, but seem'd, in the opinion of the most wise and impartial, to exceed the power of nature; which renders it very probable that the matter of their Prayers was for the most part agreeable to Scripture, otherwise 'tis hardly conceivable how they could have procured to themselves so many admirers, and abused so many honest minds into a belief that they were immediately inspired by God. And since by inspiring his Votaries with such matter of Prayer as is agreeable to Scripture, the Devil may sometimes serve his own ends, since he may thereby puff up giddy minds with pride, and self-conceit, and more effectually recommend Seducers and false Teachers

Teachers to the World ; 'tis very reasonable, to suppose that this subtle Agent who so thoroughly understands his own game, will in some cases be forward enough to do it ; and if in any case we may reasonably suppose, that the Devil may inspire men with such matter of Prayer as is agreeable to Scripture, then we can never certainly distinguish by Scripture, whether it be the Spirit of God, or the Devil, that inspires us. And can we, without blaspheming the goodness of God, imagin, that if he had continu'd this Gift of immediate inspiration to us, he would have neglected to continue such signs and testimonies of it as are necessary to distinguish it from the inspirations of the Devil? doubtless 'tis much better for us that this Gift should be totally withdrawn, and that as to the matter and expressions of our Prayer, we should be left to the guidance of Scripture and Reason, than that by the continuance of it without some certain sign to know and distinguish it, we should be left under a fatal necessity, either of rejecting Divine Inspirations, or of admitting Diabolical for Divine. And therefore since we have no such sign continu'd among us, we have all the reason in the world to conclude, that this Gift is discontinu'd, and ceas'd: especially considering that we have not only no certain sign of any such inspiration in the conceiv'd Prayers of those which most pretend to it, but many very certain ones of the contrary ; I will instance in four.

1. The great impertinence, and nonsense, and rudeness, to say no worse, that are sometimes mingled with these *Extempore* Prayers. I will not give Instances of this, because it is so notorious, that our Brethren themselves cannot but in part acknowledge it: now to attribute these faults of conceiv'd Prayers, to immediate inspiration, would be to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and
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father our own follies upon him, and yet sure had he thought meet to have continu'd to the Church this Gift of inspiration of Prayer, it would have been in order to the securing the Worship of God from those rudenesses and indecencies to which extemporary Prayers of mens own conceiving are liable; and if so, to be sure in publick Prayer at least, he would have constantly taken care to inspire such matter as is fit to be offer'd up to God, and such expressions as are fit for such matter; that so the Publick Worship of God, which is the most serious and solemn thing in the World, might not be render'd ridiculous by the folly and inadvertency of men. Whereas on the contrary, we see those publick Prayers which arrogate to themselves the honor of being inspired, are generally more liable to these indecencies, than Forms of humane composure, and that those Prayers which consist of premeditated matter and words, are commonly much better sense, and far more decent and pertinent, than our extemporary effusions; which how it should come to pass I know not, supposing the continuance of inspiration of Prayer, unless we will suppose, that Humane Composures may exceed Divine Inspirations, and that Men may ordinarily premeditate better Prayers, than the Spirit of God inspires. And methinks it seems very strange, that the Spirit should continue this Gift of inspiration to secure the Worship of God from nonsense and impertinence, and yet that after all, it should remain more liable to these indecencies, than if our publick Prayers were offered up in premeditated Forms, compos'd out of our own or other mens inventions.

2. Another sign that our compos'd Prayers are not immediately inspired is, that they are so generally tinctur'd with the particular opinions of those that offer them. You may observe that in all publick Controversies

troverfies of Religion, mens Opinions are generally to be known by their Prayers, especially if they zealouſly eſpouſe either ſide of the Queſtion: for then the debate runs ſo much in their heads, and they look upon God and Religion ſo very highly concern'd in it, that they can hardly frame a Petition, Confefſion, or Thankſgiving, without giving ſome intimation of their particular Perſwaſion; and many times one of the Petitions is, *That God would hinder the propagation of the contrary Perſwaſion, and convince their Adverſaries of the Error and Falſhood of it.* Thus for inſtance, when the Conteſt ran high between the *Presbyterians* and *Independents*, the *Arminians* and *Calviniſts*, how eaſie was it to diſtinguiſh them by their Prayers, from one another? Whether this be not ſo, I appeal to our Brethren themſelves, and to all the World? And if ſo, what plainer evidence can be given, that their Prayers were not inſpired, but of their own invention, and compoſure? For either we muſt ſuppoſe this Gift of Inſpiration to be confin'd to one Party, which would be to ſtint the Spirit with a witneſs, and everlaſtingly to puzzle our ſelves where to find it, among ſo many contending Parties that pretend to it; or elſe we muſt affirm a horrid Blaſphemy, *viz.* That the Spirit inſpires Contradictions, and indites contrary Prayers to men of oppoſite Parties.

3. Another plain ſign that our conceiv'd Prayers are not immediately inſpired is, That that which gives them the reputation of being ſo, is not ſo much the matter, as the way and manner of expreſſing them. For as for the matter of Prayer, I ſuppoſe our Brethren will not deny, but our Forms may equal at leaſt, if not exceed their conceiv'd and extemporary Prayers, and that 'tis poſſible for men, upon mature thoughts and deliberations, to compoſe and pen a Prayer, that
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shall be as full and comprehensive of the common cases, and necessities of Christians, as if he had conceived, and indited it upon the place. And if all the matter that is in a conceiv'd Prayer, may be easily contain'd and express'd in a Form, then all the difference between one and t'other must lie in the way, and manner of expressing it, and consequently it must be only upon this account, that the one must pretend to inspiration more than t'other. Now there are only two differences between Forms, and conceived Prayers, as to the way, and manner of expressing the matter in them; neither of which are so considerable, as to give the one a fairer pretence to inspiration than the other: The first is, that whereas the matter of a Form of Prayer is express'd in set, and premeditated words, the same matter in conceiv'd Prayer is express'd in extemporary words; and is it not strange, that upon such a slight, and inconsiderable difference, the one should be thought to be more inspired than the other? as if the Spirit of God continu'd the Gift of Inspiration to no other purpose, but to inable men to ask those Blessings in extemporary words, which they might as well have askt in premeditated ones. The second is, that conceiv'd Prayers do generally more enlarge and amplify on the matter of Prayer, than Forms, in which we being always tied to such a set of words, have not that liberty to expatiate on our several cases, and necessities; but this is so far from adding to the value of conceiv'd Prayers, that it rather lessens, and depreciates them; for if you observe these admired enlargements, and amplifications, are generally nothing else but only the same matter express'd again in different words, which makes our conceiv'd Prayers run out many times to that inordinate length, the same matter being repeated in them over and over in

varied phrases and expressions : how then can we entertain such mean conceits of the wisdom of the holy Spirit, as to imagin he would continue to us the Gift of immediate inspiration, meerly to inable us to repeat the same matter of Prayer to God ten or twenty times over, in different phrases and expressions? especially considering that by so doing he would cross the orders of our Saviour, who expressly forbids us in our Prayers to use vain repetitions, (or as *Munster's Hebrew* reads it, to multiply words above what is fit and seasonable) thinking we shall be heard for our much speaking, to which he subjoins this reason, *For your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask him*, Matth. 6. 7; 8. As if he should have said, you need not lengthen out your Prayers with so many copious enlargements, and varied repetitions of the same matter, as if you meant thereby more fully to instruct your Father in your wants and desires; for before ever you ask, he knows your needs, and therefore a few words will suffice to express your desires to him. And when our Saviour hath requir'd that our Prayers should be short; and pithy, and stript of all needless multiplicity of words, what reason have we to think that the Holy Spirit, who is his Vice-gerent in the Church, would continue the Gift of Inspiration meerly to amplify, and enlarge them? These enlargements of conceiv'd Prayer therefore, are so far from being signs of their immediate inspiration, that supposing the Spirit to be of the same mind with our Saviour, they are generally signs of the contrary.

4. Another plain sign that our conceiv'd Prayers are not immediately inspired is, That that extraordinary manner, and way of expressing them, for which they are thought to be inspired, doth apparently proceed from natural causes: for, as I shew'd before, the reason

son why our conceiv'd Prayers are thought by us and others to be inspir'd is, that we are many times inabled in them to enlarge extempore, with so much readiness, and fluency: which may be easily resolv'd into meer natural Enthusiasm, or present fervour of temper. And that from hence this fluency and enlargement in Prayer doth ordinarily proceed, seems very evident by two undeniable signs; first, that according to our Brethrens own confession, it comes upon them much oftener in their publick, than in their private Devotions. For this is an ordinary case in their Divinity; how comes it to pass that good men often find themselves so enlarg'd in their publick, and so streighten'd in their private Prayers? And indeed, supposing the Spirit did ordinarily inspire the matter and words of their Prayer, I see not how it could be well resolv'd, unless we suppose the Spirit to be more concern'd to inspire us with fluency of matter and words, when we are to speak before men, than when we are only to speak before God. The true resolution therefore of the case is this, that in our private Prayers we want the sighs, and groans, and passionate gestures of a devout Congregation, to chase and excite our affections, and the reverence of a numerous Auditory, to oblige us to teaz and wrack our inventions; for want of which our spirits are not ordinarily so vehemently agitated and heated as when we Pray in publick; where being more than ordinarily warm'd, partly with our own efforts and strugglings, to invent, and partly with the warmths and pious fervours of the Congregation, we are many times transported by this natural Enthusiasm, into raptures of passion and enlargement; this I say is the only reason that can be assign'd of it, unless we will suppose that which is very un-supposable of the Spirit of God, *viz.* That he is more solicitous to indite our

Prayers when we are in the presence of men, than when we are only in the presence of God. Secondly, Another sign that this admired fluency and enlargement in Prayer proceeds from meer natural Enthusiasm is this, that generally in the beginning of the Prayer they find themselves streighten'd and confin'd, both as to the matter and words of it, till they have Pray'd on for a while, and then they grow more ready and fluent; which how it should come to pass, I know not, supposing the Prayer were inspired, unless perhaps the Spirit comes in only in the middle, or towards the latter end of their Prayer, but leaves them to their own invention in the beginning, and what reason there should be for such an imagination, I confess I am not able to guess. The true account therefore of the matter is this, that in the beginning of the Prayer their Spirits are usually dull, and sluggish, and do not flow and reflow so briskly to their heads and hearts as afterwards, when they have been thoroughly chaf'd and heated with the labour and exercise of invention; by which being excited and awaken'd, they naturally raise the drooping fancy, and render the invention more copious, fluent, and easie. So that meerly by the Laws of Matter and Motion, as plain an account may be given of this extemporary fluency and enlargement of Prayer, as of any other natural effect whatsoever; and therefore for our Brethren to attribute to the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God, that which hath such apparent signs of its derivation from natural causes; is, I conceive, very unwarrantable. By all which, I think, it's very evident, not only that we have no sign of the continuance of this Gift of Inspiration of Prayer remaining among us, but that we have manifest signs of the contrary.

4. And lastly, That to suppose the continuance of this Gift of Inspiration of Prayer, is to suppose more than our Brethren themselves will allow of, *viz.* That their conceiv'd Prayers are infallible, and of equal authority with the Word of God. For if our Prayers are dictated to us by the Spirit of God, they must be as infallible as he, whose infinite knowledge cannot suffer him to be deceiv'd, and whose infinite veracity will not admit him to deceive: and if so, then whatsoever he dictates, or inspires, must be remov'd from all possibility of error, or mistake; and consequently our Prayers must be so too, supposing he inspires the matter and words of them. And as they must be infallible in themselves, so they must be of equal authority with Scripture: for that which gives the Scriptures the authority of the Word of God, is, their being inspired by the Spirit of God, and therefore whatsoever matter or words are so inspired, are as much the Word of God, as any matter or words in Scripture: *All Scripture is given*, saith the Apostle, *by the Inspiration of God.* And therefore whatsoever is given by his Inspiration, must necessarily be his Word: for what those Holy Men of God spake, who deliver'd the Scripture, they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, *1 Pet. 1. 21.* and therefore what they deliver'd was the Word of God, because their Mouths were the Oracles through which God spake; if therefore when we Pray, we are mov'd, as they were, by the immediate inspiration of God, what we pray, must be as much the Word of God, as what they spake. So that either our Brethren must affirm, that their conceiv'd Prayers are of equal authority with Scripture, (which I am sure no sober Dissenter will presume) or deny that they are immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost.

And

And thus I have shewn what those extraordinary Operations are, which the Scripture attributes to the Spirit in Prayer. I proceed in the next place, to enquire what the ordinary and standing Operations are, which the Scripture attributes to him, and which he hath promised to continue to the end of the World. Of which I shall give but a very brief account, because herein we are all agreed.

In short therefore, the ordinary Operations of the Spirit consist in exciting in us the graces and proper affections of Prayer, such as shame and sorrow in the confession of our sins, a sense of our need of mercy, and a hope of obtaining it in our supplications for pardon, resignation to God's will, and dependance on his goodness in our Prayers for temporal mercies, and deliverances, hunger and thirst after righteousness in our Petitions for his grace and assistance, and in a word, gratitude, and love, and admiration of God in our Praises and Thanksgivings for Mercy. For in these divine and gracious Affections, the life and soul of Prayer consists: as for the Words and Expressions of it, about which our Brethren disagree with us, they are of no other account with God, than as they signify to him the graces and affections of our Prayers, without which he regards them no more, than he doth the whistling of the wind; and therefore since these affections are the main of our Prayer, and words are nothing in his account in comparison with them; can any man be so vain as to imagine, that those affections will be ever a whit the less acceptable to him, because they are presented in a form of words, and not in extemporary Effusions? Sure that Father would be very capricious, that should deny Bread to his hungry Child, meerly because he askt it to day in the same words that he did yesterday; and to imagine that God will

will dislike or reject the good affections of our Prayer, meerly because they are every day express'd in the same form, is to suppose him a very captious Being, and one that is more taken with our words, than with our affections: the contrary of which he hath given sufficient proof of in this very particular, in that whereas he hath withdrawn from us (as I have prov'd at large) the inspiration of the words of our Prayer, and left them to the composure of our own or other mens invention; he still continues to inspire us with the affections of Prayer, and to excite them to a due activity. For to this, among other purposes, it is, that he hath promised to continue his Holy Spirit to us, to enable us to address our selves to him with devout and holy affections: thus *Gal. 4. 6. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba father*: that is, by kindling devout and filial affections in your souls, enabling you to cry to God with all earnestness and assurance, as to a kind and merciful Father: and hence also we are said to Pray in or by the Holy Ghost, *Jude 20.* it being by him that those good affections are rais'd in us that we offer up to God in our Prayers: and therefore we may well be said to Pray by the Spirit, because 'tis by the Spirit that we are inspired with those holy affections which are the soul of our Prayer; and accordingly the Spirit is said to *make intercession for us with sighs and groans, which are not to be uttered*, *Rom. 8. 26.* which words are far from asserting the inspiration of the matter and words of our Prayer, though they are urg'd by our Brethren for that purpose: for as for the matter of Prayer, here is not the least hint of the Spirit's inspiring it, for as to that, the Christians, whom he speaks of, were well instructed already by their Christian institution; but all that is affirm'd, is,
that

that the Spirit inabled them to offer up the matter of Prayer to God in a most devout and affectionate manner; with sighs and groans, that is, with earnest and flagrant affections. And as for the words of Prayer, the Text is so far from implying the inspiration of them, that it plainly tells us, that those sighs and groans which the Spirit inspired, were such as were not to be utter'd or worded. And surely to inspire us with affections that are too big for words, cannot imply the inspiration of words. So that the Spirit's interceeding for us with sighs and groans that are not to be utter'd, can imply no more, than his exciting in us the proper affections of Prayer; and in this sense he is said in the next Verse, *to make intercession for the Saints according to the will of God, viz.* by inabling them to offer up the matter of Prayer to God with such fervent and devout affections as are necessary to render it acceptable to him: which is properly to interceed for us; for as Christ, who is our Advocate in Heaven, doth offer up our Prayers to the Father, and inforce them with his own intercessions; so his Spirit, who is our Advocate upon Earth, begets in us those affections which render our Prayers prevalent, and wings them with fervour and ardency: the one pleads with God for us in our own hearts, by kindling such desires there as render our Prayers acceptable to him; and the other pleads with him for us in Heaven, by presenting those desires, and soliciting their supply and acceptance. And thus you see what that standing and ordinary Operation is which the Scripture attributes to the Spirit in Prayer.

And now, before I proceed to determin the present case, I shall only farther inquire, what it means by that Phrase of stinting and limiting the Spirit. In short therefore, to stint or limit the Spirit, is a modern Phrase,

Phrase, of which there is not the least intimation in Scripture, or Antiquity; but 'tis a term of Art coin'd and invented by our Brethren, and appli'd only to the present Controversie, concerning the lawfulness of Forms of Prayer. Which, by the way, is a plain evidence, that this argument against Forms, *viz.* That they stint the Spirit, is very new, since though Forms of Prayer were used not only in the Scripture Ages, as I shall shew hereafter, but also in all successive Ages of Christianity; yet, till very lately, we never heard on syllable of stinting or limiting the Spirit by them.

The meaning of which Phrase is this; That by using Forms of Prayer, we hinder the Spirit from affording us some assistance in Prayer, which otherwise we might reasonably expect from him: for so our Brethren explain the Phrase, *viz.* That by confining our selves to a Form of Words, we restrain the Spirit from giving us that assistance, which he ordinarily vouchsafes in conceiv'd Prayer.

And now, having fully stated the Case, the resolution of it will be short and easie. It hath been shewn at large, that there are two sorts of assistances in Prayer which the Scripture attributes to the Spirit; the first extraordinary, and temporary; *viz.* the immediate inspiration of the matter, and words of Prayer: the second ordinary, and abiding; *viz.* exciting the devotion, and proper affections of Prayer: If therefore the Spirit be stinted, hinder'd, or restrain'd, by Forms of Prayer, it must be either from inspiring the words and matter, or from exciting the affections of Prayer; as for the latter, to which this Phrase of stinting is never appli'd by our Brethren, I shall discourse of it at large in the third Case, wherein I shall endeavour to prove, that Forms of Prayer are so far from restraining the devotion of it, that they very much promote

and improve it. And as for the former, *viz.* the inspiration of the matter and words of Prayer, that I have prov'd was extraordinary, and intended only as other miraculous Gifts were, for the first propagation of the Gospel; and therefore since as to this matter, the Spirit hath stinted himself, it's certain, that Forms of Prayer cannot stint him; for how can that be stinted which is not? and if now there be no such thing as immediate inspiration of Prayer, how can it be limited by a Form of Prayer? In a word, if the Spirit of his own accord hath long since withdrawn this Gift of inspiration, how can it be now said that he is restrain'd from communicating it by any cause without him?

Case II.

Whether the Use of Publick Forms, be not a sinful neglect of the Ministerial Gift of Prayer?

In order to the resolution of which Case, it would be necessary to give a brief state of it, according as it is put, and urg'd by our Brethren. By the Gift of Prayer then, they mean an ability to express our minds to God in Prayer, or to offer up our desires and affections to him in words, befitting the matter of them: which ability, say they, is given by God to his Ministers, as a means of publick Prayer, and in order to their being the Mouths of their Congregations to God, to represent to him the common Cases and Necessities of their People; and therefore since God, say they, hath given us this Gift, as a means of publick Devotion, and in order to our offering up the Prayers of the People, it may be justly question'd, whether we may lawfully omit the use of it, by using publick Forms of other mens composition.

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Now, before I enter into a particular consideration of this Case, I shall briefly premise these two things :

1. That this Case concerns the Clergy only, and not the Laity : For suppose that it be unlawful for Ministers to omit the use of their own abilities to express the Devotions of their Congregations, what is that to the People ? are they accountable for their Ministers faults ? or will God reject their sincere Devotions, because the Person that utters them is guilty of a sinful omission ? if so, it will be of dangerous consequence to them to joyn in any publick Prayers at all, whether they be Forms, or Extemporary ; they being every whit as accountable for the nonsense, impertinence, and irreverence of their Ministers in the latter, as for their omitting the use of their own abilities in the former : if therefore this omission be a sin, it is the sin of the Minister ; as for the People, they joyn'd with him indeed, in offering up the matter of Prayer, which is contain'd in the Form he pronounces ; but they join not with him in the omission of the use of his ability ; that is his own proper act, and deed ; and therefore if it be unlawful, 'tis he, and he only that is accountable for it : and if the matter of Prayer in which they join with him be good, and express'd in decent and suitable words, they join with him in nothing but what is acceptable to God, and 'tis not to be imagin'd that God will be angry with them, because he neglected to express their desires in words of his own composure and invention.

2. I shall also premise, that this is not the case of the Clergy of the Church of *England*, who, though they stand obliged to the constant use of a stated Liturgy, yet are not hereby restrain'd from the exercise of their own abilities in publick Prayer : for after they have finish'd the Service appointed in the Liturgy, they

are permitted to use their own conceiv'd Prayers in the Pulpit: in which they have the same liberty, that the dissenting Ministers can claim or pretend to; that is, to express in their own words all the matter of publick Prayer, with all the sobriety, affection, and seriousness they are able; and this permission being of long continuance, and hitherto uncontroll'd by our Church Governors, amounts to an allowance; and indeed it seems expressly allow'd in our 55th Canon, which directs, *that before all Sermons, Lectures, and Homilies, the Preachers and Ministers shall move the People to join with them in Prayer, in this form, or to this effect, as briefly as conveniently they may.* Now that *to this effect*, as it stands oppos'd to *this form*, is meant some Prayer of our own, compos'd to this purpose, seems evident from the general and uninterrupted practice of the Church, which in doubtful cases, is the best explication of her meaning. Since therefore the use of our Liturgy doth not exclude the exercise of our Gift of Prayer, but leaves us free to exert it, so far as it is fit, that is, with *convenient brevity*, I see not how this Case can concern our Clergy; for if the evil of Forms consists in the Ministers omission of his own Gift, as this Case supposes, then where the use of Forms doth not oblige us to this omission, but leaves us as free to exercise this Gift, as those are who use no Forms at all, the supposed evil is remov'd from it.

Having premised these things, I shall proceed to a particular resolution of the Case; which I shall do in these following Propositions.

I. That this Ministerial Gift of Prayer, or ability to express in our own words, the common Devotions of our Congregations to God, is either natural, or acquir'd. 'Tis true, if we had any reason to believe, that in their admission

admission to holy Orders, God did inspire his Ministers with this ability; we might thence more plausibly infer, that 'twas his will that we should ordinarily exercise it; and that it was not lawful to neglect or omit it, by using Forms of other mens composure; it being unlikely that God should inspire them with an ability, which he did not intend they should make use of: but of Gods inspiring us in our Ordination with this Gift, or Ability, we have not only no promise in Scripture, which is the only foundation upon which we can reasonably expect it; but in fact, we have no experience of any such matter among us: for not only we, but the Dissenting Ministers must own, if they will speak ingenuously, that just before their Ordination, they were as able to express the Devotions of a Congregation, as they were just after; which shews that they had no new ability to Pray, inspired in their Ordination: and as yet, I could never find any proof, either from Scripture, or Experience, that this ability to Pray in words of our own composure, had any thing more in it, than a promptness of invention and speech; which some men have by nature, and which others have acquired by art and practice; and if so, this ability is no otherwise the Gift of God, than our natural strength and vigour, or our skill in Languages and History. And methinks it's very strange, that after all this talk of the Gift of Prayer, which is supposed ordinarily at least to be conferr'd on rightly ordained Ministers, our Brethren should not be able to produce one Promise, wherein God hath engag'd himself, to confer it; no nor one Text of Scripture, which implies such a Promise; all that he hath promised his Ministers is, to concur with their honest indeavours, so far forth as it's necessary to inable them to discharge the Duties of their Office, and to suppose that they
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cannot do this, without praying *Extempore*, or in their own words, is to take the Matter in question, for granted.

2. That this natural or acquired Gift, is no where appropriated by God to prayer, but left common to other uses, and purposes : For though in Ministers especially, it is ordinarily called a Gift of Prayer, yet it is no where stiled so in Scripture : indeed the ability of praying in unknown languages, is once called a Gift, as I observed before, but as for this ordinary ability, whether natural, or acquir'd, of praying in our native language, it is no where spoken of in Scripture, under the name of a Gift of Prayer, nor is there the least mention of any such ability given by God to men, purely to inable them to pray; and unless our brethren can produce some Text of Scripture, which yet they never attempted, wherein God hath appropriated this Gift to the purpose of Prayer, they must give us leave to conclude, that he hath left it common to all other honest uses, and purposes that it can be apply'd to; and that in short, it is nothing but a freedom of Utterance, and Elocution, which in some is natural, and in some acquired, by which they are inabled readily to express their minds to God, or men; and therefore to how many honest purposes this common Gift of God is applicable, to so many 'tis designed, and intended; and consequently, may as well be call'd the Gift of Conversation in good company, and the Gift of pleading at the Bar, and the Gift of disputing in the Schools, or the Gift of Oratory in the *Forum*, as the Gift of Prayer in Private, or Publique worship; it being all but one, and the same Gift apply'd to several uses, and purposes; accordingly we find that those who have this Gift, have it not only while they are speaking in Prayer, but when they are speaking

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ing upon other occasions ; and that ordinarily they can exprefs themselves to Men with the same readinefs, and fluency in converfation, as they exprefs their minds to God in Prayer, which is a plain argument that their Gift is not appropriat to Prayer, but common to all the other uſes, and purpoſes of Elocution.

3. That this Gift of utterance not being appropriated by God to Prayer, may upon juſt reaſon, be a lawfully omitted in Prayer, as in any other uſe or purpoſe 'tis deſigned for : I do confeſs had God any where appropriated it to the end of Prayer, thoſe who have it, were obliged to uſe it to that end, and to omit it ordinarily, by confining themſelves to forms of other mens inditing, would be to neglect a means of Prayer of Gods ſpecial appointment and institution ; for had he any where intimated to us, that he gave it us purely to enable us to pray without any reſpect to any other end, we could not have omitted the uſe of it in Prayer without croſſing his intention, and frustrating him of the only end for which he intended it, but ſince he hath given us no ſuch intimation, we may juſtly conclude that he intends it in common for all thoſe honeſt ends to which it is applicable, and if ſo 'tis no more unlawful to omit uſing it to one end than to another, ſo that either it muſt be wholly unlawful to omit uſing our own Elocution to any purpoſe whatſoever whereunto it may be honeſtly applied, or it muſt be lawful to omit it in Prayer, and conſequently ſuppoſing I have this Gift of utterance, either I may not uſe a form in petitioning my Prince, or a Court of Juſtice, or I may uſe a form in addreſſing my ſelf to God in Prayer, ſince my Gift is common to both theſe purpoſes, and no more appropriated to the one than the other, in ſhort therefore as for thoſe common Gifts of
God

God which are applicable to sundry purposes, and which he intends no more for one than for another, it is left to our own liberty and discretion whether we will apply them to this or that particular purpose or no, and no man is obliged to use his Gift to all those just and lawful purposes it is capable of, and if he hath two Gifts which serve to the same purpose, there is no doubt but he may lawfully omit the one, and use the other as he sees occasion; and so it is with this Gift of utterance, which is naturally serviceable to sundry excellent purposes, and among others to this of expressing our minds to God in Prayer, but it being serviceable to this in common with others, it is left to our liberty whether we will employ it in this, in that, or in another purpose, and we are neither obliged to employ it in all, nor in this more than in another, but if we have another Gift that is serviceable to the purpose of Prayer as well as this of utterance, it is left to our own pious discretion whether we will use this or the other, so that unless our Brethren can prove that this Gift of utterance or Elocution is by special command of God made an appropriate means of Publick Prayer, they will never be able to prove, either that it is more unlawful to omit the use of it in Prayer, than in any other Office of Elocution, or that if we have any other means of Prayer, we are determined to this more than to another.

4. That to read our desires to God in other Mens Words, is as much a means of Prayer, as to speak them in our own, for to speak in our own Words, is no otherwise a means of Publick Prayer, than as it serves to express to God the Common cases and necessities of the Congregation, and if these may be as well express'd by Reading them in other Mens Words, as by speaking them in our own, the end of Publick Prayer

Prayer is as effectually serv'd by the one, as by the other, and sure no man will deny, but that by a Form of Words compos'd by another, he may express the common Devotions of a Congregation, as well as by extempore or premeditated words of his own invention; for this would be in effect to say, that none but himself can compose a publick Prayer, or at least none so well as he; for if another Prayer may be as expressive of the Devotions of a Congregation as his own, I can see no reason why the reading of that may not be as proper a means of publick Prayer, as the speaking of this; here then are two means of Prayer, *viz.* reading other mens Forms, and speaking our own Conceptions, and therefore unless our Brethren can prove, that God hath expressly chosen the one, and rejected the other, they must acknowledge both to be lawful; and if we cannot lawfully omit the one, because it is a means of Prayer, neither can we lawfully omit the other, because it is so too; and therefore either we must be obliged to use them both, which is impossible at the same time, or we must be left at liberty to use either, according to our own discretion. In sum therefore, since we are not inspired with any peculiar Gift of Prayer in our Ordination, and since our Gift of praying in our own words is not appropriated by God to this use, but left in common to other purposes, and since what is not appropriated by God, may be lawfully omitted, when there are other means of Prayer, and since in fact there is another means of Prayer besides this of praying in our own words, *viz.* praying in the words of others, which God hath left as free to us as the former, it plainly follows from the whole, that to omit the use of our own Gift, and in the stead of it to use that other Gift of praying in the words of others, is not in it self any way sinful or unlawful.

Case III.

Whether the Use of Publick Forms of Prayer doth not deaden the Devotion of Prayer ?

For thus our Brethren argue, that by the command of God we are obliged not only to pray, but to pray with the utmost devotion we are able, and accordingly to use such means of Prayer as are most apt to heighten and intend our devotion, and thus far we agree with them ; if therefore Forms are in themselves, and not through our fault and erroneous prejudice, less apt to quicken and raise devotion than conceiv'd Prayers, it will be granted of all hands, that this is a good Argument against the use of them. This therefore is the case wherein we differ, our Brethren say, that Forms of Publick Worship, (for 'tis that we are now discoursing of,) are in themselves apt to dispirit and deaden the Devotions of those that use them ; we say the contrary, viz. that publick Forms are in themselves more apt to improve and quicken the common Devotions, than Extemporary Prayers of the Ministers own conceiving ; in order therefore to the clearing and full resolution of this Case, we will briefly enquire into these three things :

1. What these advantages to Publick Devotion are, which conceived, or extemporary Prayers pretend to ?
2. Whether these Advantages are not for the most part fantastical and imaginary, and whether so far as they are real they are not much more peculiar to Forms than to extempore Prayer ?
3. Whether besides these common advantages publick Forms have not peculiar advantages, which conceiv'd Prayers cannot pretend to ?

1. We will enquire what those advantages to the publick Devotions are which conceiv'd or extemporary Prayers pretend to; in short, it is pretended in the behalf of conceiv'd Prayers, that they do much more fix the attention, and raise the intention of the Peoples minds in Prayer, than publick Forms; that is, that they do more confine the roving of mens thoughts in Prayer, and keep their minds more attentive to it, and that they do much more warm and enliven their affections in it; for, say our Brethren, the Devotions of the people are very much rais'd or deaden'd by the performance of the Minister, according as he is more or less devout in it; and as for the Minister, he must needs be much more devout in a Prayer of his own conceiving, than in the use of a publick Form; because first, say they, 'tis impossible for him to keep his mind so attentive in reading a Prayer, as in conceiving one in his own mind, and speaking it from his own conceptions; the care of performing which naturally bounds the wanderings of his thoughts, and keeps them more fixt and attentive; and secondly, because when he utters his words immediately from his affections, his thoughts have not that scope to wander, as when he reads them out of a Book. And as conceived doth more fix the attention of the Minister, so it doth also more raise his intention, or in other words, more warm and inflame his affections; for first, whereas in reading a Form, his affections follow his words, and are raised and excited by them, in conceived Prayer, his words follow his affections, and are immediately utter'd from, and indited by them; and secondly, how is it possible, say they, that the words of another, which he reads out of a Form, should so well express his affections

tions as his own ; besides, thirdly, that while he is reading his Form , his soul is so intent in directing his eye to read, that it cannot direct its affections to God with that fervour and intention as it might do in conceiv'd Prayer. These are the supposed helps which the Ministers devotion, and from his the Peoples receive from conceiv'd Prayers, above what Forms of Prayer can afford : and as conceiv'd Prayer hath these peculiar advantages to raise the Ministers devotion, and by his the Peoples, so it hath another advantage by which it more immediately influences the devotion of the People, *viz.* that the matter of it is still exprest in new words, which must needs much more affect the attention of the People, than when it is always exprest in the same words without any variation ; And this, so far as I can gather from the Writings of our Brethren, is the sum of what they plead in behalf of conceiv'd Prayer, as to its peculiar advantageousness to publick Devotion above stated Forms.

2. Therefore we will enquire whether these Advantages are not in a great measure imaginary , and whether so far as they are real, they are not much more peculiar to Forms, than to conceiv'd Prayer. And here I will readily grant, that by expressing a serious and devout affection, the Minister doth really advantage the Devotion of the Congregation , even as by his good example in all other things he excites the people to a pious and virtuous imitation ; in whose eyes devotion never looks so amiable, as when 'tis exprest in serious and well compos'd words, accompanied with a devout, a sober, and affectionate behaviour : both which are equally necessary to excite the devotion of the People : if therefore it be really true, that the use of conceived or extempore Prayer is in its own nature
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most apt to fix the attention, and excite the intention of the Minister in Prayer, it must be confest that herein it hath the advantage of Forms. 1. Therefore we will inquire whether these advantages it pretends to, as to the exciting the Ministers attention in Prayer, be real, or no : The first advantage is, that the very conceiving the matter of his Prayer, and speaking it from his own conceptions, doth naturally more bind his attention, than the reading it out of a Form ; but I beseech you, what doth it more bind him to attend to ? is it to attend to the words and phrases ? if so, then 'tis not to attend to the acts of Prayer, or is it to attend to those acts which are the proper business of Prayer ? that is to be asham'd of sin, and to bewail it in confession, to be sensible of the common wants, and common dependancies upon God for supply in petition, to admire God's perfections, and gratefully commemorate his goodness in praise and thanksgiving ; for in these things the true devotion both of Minister and People consists ; and 'tis only by being an example of these in his Prayer, that the Minister excites the devotion of his people : 'tis by confessing sin, as if he were asham'd of, and sorry for it, that he excites their shame and sorrow ; by petitioning for mercy, as if he were sensible of the want of it, and did heartily desire it, and depended upon God for it, that he excites their sense of need, and their desire, and hope of relief, and supply ; by praising and thanking God, as if he heartily admired his excellencies, and gratefully resented his goodness that he excites their admiration and gratitude ; that mode of Prayer therefore which is most apt to fix the Ministers attention to these acts of devotion, must needs be most apt to excite the devotions of the people : Now as for the mode of praying from his own conceptions, I really think that it is much more apt to
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unfix the Ministers attention to these acts, than that of praying by a Form; because it forces him to attend to other things at the same time, *viz.* the recollection of matter, and invention of suitable expressions, which must more or less divert him from attending to the inward acts of devotion, according as his fancy and tongue are more or less pregnant and voluble; it being impossible for him to attend at the same time, to several things, as closely as he may to one: but when he prays by a Form, his matter and words are ready before him, and so he hath nothing else to do, but to attend to his devotion; and certainly when a man hath but one thing to do in Prayer, he may attend to that more fixedly and closely, than when he hath two or three: 'tis true, by being released from attending to the invention of his matter and words, his mind is more at leisure to wander, and instead of attending as he ought more closely to the acts of devotion, by employing those thoughts which in conceiv'd Prayer he employs in invention in a closer attention to the acts of devotion, he may, if he please, permit them to rove abroad; but if he doth, the fault is in himself, and not in the Form he prays by: the design of his Form is to release his mind from all other business in Prayer, but only that of inward devotion, which is the life of Prayer, that so it may be the more attentive to it: but if instead of applying his mind to this design, he suffers it to wander abroad, he makes an ill use of a good thing, and converts that which is in it self a help to devotion, into an occasion of indevotion: but 'tis objected, that while his thoughts are employed in inventing the matter and words of his Prayer, they are attending to the duty of Prayer, and while they are so, they are well employ'd, though they should not be so attentively fixt upon the inward devo-

devotion of Prayer, as they might be in the use of a Form: to which in short I answer, That to invent the matter and words of Prayer, is not to pray, but to study a Prayer; and till our Brethren have proved, that our inventing the matter and words, is a part of our duty of Prayer, which is the Question in debate between us, we can by no means grant, that our attention to it is attending to the duty of Prayer; we believe that when we pray devoutly by a Form, we discharge the whole duty of Prayer, though we do not invent the matter and words our selves, and when we see the contrary proved, we will not only yield that to attend to inventing, is to attend to the duty of Prayer; but that it is unlawful to pray by a Form: but in the mean time we can yield neither one, nor t'other. Seeing then that Forms are in themselves more apt to fix the Ministers attention to the inward acts of devotion, and seeing that 'tis by attending to these acts, or at least by seeming to do so, that he influences the attention of the people, it necessarily follows, that in this respect Forms are more advantageous to publick devotion, than conceiv'd or extemporary Prayer. But then,

2. It is pretended that conceiv'd Prayer is in it self more apt to fix the Ministers attention in Prayer than Forms, because in conceiv'd Prayer he utters his words immediately from his affections; by reason of which his thoughts have not that scope to wander, as when he reads them out of a Book: to which, in short, I answer, That if he hath devout affections, he may utter his words as immediately from his affections in a Form, as in a conceiv'd Prayer; and therefore this pretence is altogether insignificant; for his own invention is as much a *medium* between his affections and utterance in Praying extempore, as the Book in praying

ing by a Form ; as for instance, suppose that in confessing sin, he be affected with shame and sorrow, he cannot express it in words, but by using his own invention, or a Form, and whether he uses one, or t'other, he uses a *medium* to express it ; and why those words which he reads should not be as immediate to his affections as those which he invents, provided they do as fully express them, I am not able to apprehend ; in short therefore, if he hath devout affections, they will at least as much confine his thoughts from wandering when he prays by Form, as when he prays Extempore, if he hath not, he cannot utter his words from his affections, either in the one or t'other.

2. We will inquire whether those advantages which our Brethren ascribe to conceiv'd Prayer above Forms, as to the raising the Ministers intention in Prayer, be real, or no : first they pretend that in reading a Form, his affections follow his words, and are raised and excited by them ; whereas in praying extempore , his words follow his affections. This I confess is a very curious distinction, but I am not able to apprehend either what foundation there is for it, or how it is applicable to the matter ; for first what necessity is there either that his affections should follow his words in a Form, more than in a conceiv'd Prayer, or that his words should follow his affections in a conceiv'd Prayer, more than in a Form ? why may not a man be devoutly affected with the matter he prays for, before he expresses in a Form of words, as well as before he expresses it extempore ? since if he be acquainted with the Form, he cannot but know before-hand what he is to pray for in it ; and therefore if he be truly devout, cannot but be affected with it, before he prays for it ; and so on the other hand, why may not a man as well be unaffected with the matter he prays for in conceiv'd Prayer,

Prayer, till he hath exprest it, as with the matter he prays for in a Form ? or what reason can be assign'd, why the affection may not follow the words, and be excited by them in the one, as well as in the other ? may not a man pray inconsiderately, and suffer his tongue, to run before his heart in both ? and may not his affections which were before asleep, be awakened by the sound of his words in either ? In short therefore, since in praying by a Form, a man may know as well at least, and hath as much time to consider the matter he is to pray for before-hand, as in praying extempore ; what reason is there why it should be more difficult for him to affect his soul before-hand with it in the one, than in the other ? and if it be equally hard and easie in both, than 'tis equally possible for his affections to go before, or follow his words in either. But then secondly, suppose it were true, that in conceiv'd Prayer the words follow the affections, and in a Form the affections the words, how doth it from hence follow, that conceiv'd Prayer doth more intend and heighten the affections, than Forms ? what reason can there be assign'd, why those acts of inward affections, which follow our words in Prayer, should not be as intense and vigorous as those which go before them ? why may not a man exert as flagrant an act of desire, immediately after he hath exprest his Petition, as immediately before, especially if that be true which our Brethren affirm, and which most men find by experience ; that the words of Prayer, if they are proper and expressive, do naturally quicken and excite the affections ; so that if it be the matter only that excites the affections, they may be as vehemently excited after the words are spoken as before ; if it be the words also, the affections must be less vehemently excited before the words, than after : in short therefore, when the

Minister prays in publick, whether it be by Form, or extempore, he prays on, without making any long pauses between one Petition and another, so that as soon as ever he hath conceived the matter, he expresses it, and whether it be immediately before or immediately after, or while he is expressing it, that he joyns his affection to it, there can be no reason assign'd, if it be the matter he joyns them to, why he should more affect it now, than then, there being nothing in the order of before or after, to raise and excite his affection: and if so, his affections following his words, though it were necessary to his praying by a Form, can be no disadvantage to his Devotion, nor the contrary an advantage to it, though it were necessary to his praying extempore: but then secondly, it is pretended that the Minister cannot so well express his devout affections in other mens words, as in his own, and therefore when he prays in a Form of words of other mens compofure, 'tis impossible his affections should be so lively represented, as when he prays extempore: To which in short I answer, That the Ministers business in publick Prayer is not to express the degrees and heights of his own affections, or to acquaint God of the particular and extraordinary fervencies of his own soul: for in publick he prays as the common mouth of the Congregation, and therefore he ought not to express to God in the name of the People, any matter that is peculiar to himself, or to represent his own particular extraordinary fervours, as the common case of the Congregation, but his words ought to be such as every honest and ordinary Christian may truly joyn with, as the sense and meaning of his own soul; and for him to express to God in the name of the People, such heights of Devotion as few or none of them are arrived to, is as bad as to confess in their names such sins to God, as few or none

none of them are guilty of. So that if the Minister hath such peculiar heights of affection as can be fitly exprest only in his own words, he ought not to tell God of them in a publick Prayer, in which he is to exprest nothing but what is the true and common sense of every honest and sincere Christian; and this certainly may be as fitly exprest in another mans words, as in his own, unless we will suppose that no man can so well exprest the common sense of a Christian Congregation, as he that prays extempore, yea, and that he himself cannot so fitly exprest it in premeditated words, as in extemporary ones; neither of which I suppose any sober Dissenter will affirm. But then Thirdly and lastly, it is also pretended, that in the use of Forms, the Ministers soul is so engaged in directing his eye to read, that it cannot be so intently affected with what he prays for, as when he prays extempore; in answer to which, I leave the Reader to judge, whether the recollecting of the matter of Prayer, the disposing of it into a due method, and inventing of proper phrases to exprest it, (neither of which are acts of Prayer, as I shew'd before) must not much more busie and engage the Ministers soul when he is praying publicly, than the directing of his eye to read; that is, whether one that hath so perfect a habit of reading as that he can readily exercise it without imploying one thought about it, cannot read a Prayer more easily, than invent one? for so much easier as it is to read than to invent a Prayer, so much less his soul hath to divert it from being affected with what he prays for when he prays by a Form, than when he prays extempore. And thus you see that those advantages which are ascribed to conceiv'd Prayer, as to the raising the Ministers Devotion, are such as are either imaginary, or as ought rather to be ascribed to Forms.

But it is pretended, that Forms of Prayer do not only deaden the Ministers Devotion, and so by consequence the Peoples, but that they do also deaden the Peoples by a more direct and immediate influence, because they still express the matter of Prayer in the same words, which when the People have often heard, will be apt to cloy their attention, whereas the very newness and variety of words, in which conceiv'd Prayers are express'd, doth naturally awaken and entertain their minds and keep them more fixt and intent. For answer whereunto, let us consider upon what it is that this novelty and variety of expression doth keep our minds so fixt and intent on, is it upon the matter of Prayer? doubtless, No; for that is generally the same, especially the matter of publick Prayer, and therefore if it were that that fixt our minds, 'twould as well do it in the same as in new and varied expressions; and since the matter of publick Prayer is old, and for the main will be always so, why should it not as well affect us in old words as in new, provided they express it with equal propriety and fitness; but if it be meerly the newness of the phrase 'tis express'd in, that fixes their minds: there is nothing in it but a meer surprise and amusement of their fancies, which instead of fixing doth unfix their minds from the internal acts of Prayer, and divert its attention from the devotion to the oratory of it; so that this fixation of their minds on the novelty of the phrase and method of Prayer is so far from being an advantage, that 'tis a distraction to their devotion. As for Forms of Prayer, there is no doubt but they may be compos'd with the same advantage of expression and pronounced with the same affection as the Prayers of our own extempore composure, and if they are so, they will have the same advantage of the musick of speech to excite the Devotions of the People; but

but as for novelty of method and expression, that may indeed entertain their minds and divert them from roving out to other objects, but even this entertainment is a roving and excursion of their minds from the acts of Prayer, which, while they are amused with the novelty of the phrase and method of the Prayer, can be no more intent on the devotion of it, than while they are busied about secular objects and affairs. And indeed that seeming devotion that is raised in the minds of the People by the gingling of the Ministers words about their fancies, is generally false and counterfeit, for as words do naturally impress the fancy, so the fancy doth naturally excite the sensitive affections; so that when the affections are excited meerly by the art and musick of the words of Prayer, it is not Devotion but Mechanism; for there is no doubt but men may be and many times are strangely affected with the words of Prayer when they have not the least spark of true devotion to the matter of it; for when they fancy the matter of Prayer and are affected with it meerly for the sake of the words, the movement of their affection will cease as soon as the impression is worn out which the words make upon their fancies, and if in the mean time they happen to hear any other matter expressed in the same affectionate words, they will in all probability be as much affected with it, as they are now with the matter of Prayer, but if the mind be truly devout and doth affect the matter of Prayer for it self and not for the sake of the words, I cannot imagine how new words should any way advantage its devotion, unless they were to express new matter. Since therefore the matter of publick Prayer neither is nor ought to be new, unless it be upon extraordinary publick emergencies, what colour of reason can there be assign'd, why the devotion of the hearers should be
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more affected with it in new words than in 'old, supposing it be express'd and pronounc'd with the same propriety and affection in both. And thus I have shewn that those advantages of publick Devotion which are pretended to be peculiar to conceiv'd Prayers, are for the most part imaginary, and that so far forth as they are real they are more peculiar to Forms of Prayer, I proceed to the third and last enquiry, *viz.*

3. Whether there are not sundry advantages of publick Devotion peculiar to Forms of Prayer, which conceived Prayers cannot pretend to? That there are, I do affirm, and will endeavour to prove by these following Instances.

1. One great advantage that is peculiar to publick Forms of Prayer, is, That the People may address themselves to them with greater preparation; for if they please, they may peruse the words before-hand, and consider the sense and matter of them, and endeavour to affect their minds with it; as for instance, when I know before-hand what words my sins will be confest in, when I am to joyn in the publick Devotions, I can consider before-hand the sense and meaning of them, and prepare such affection as are suitable to them; as suppose the confession be that of our Church's Liturgy, wherein we begin with *Almighty and most merciful Father*; I can consider the meaning of these words before I come to Church; and from the consideration of God's almighty and most merciful nature, excite my affections to an awful dread of his power, and an ingenuous sense of his mercy; by which when I come to joyn with these words in the publick confession, I shall be duely affected with the sense of them, and my soul will beready melted into all that filial sorrow and humiliation for my sin, with the consideration that I have offended by it an Almighty and most
merciful

merciful Father suggests; and so if I consider, and apply before-hand all the rest of the confession, I shall thereby tune and set my affections to the sense and matter of each particular phrase and expression in it; which 'twill be impossible for me to do when I am to joyn with an extempore Prayer; because I cannot know before-hand what the phrases and expressions of it will be; besides which, upon the words of publick Forms, there may be written excellent Paraphrases and Meditations, such as is that of the *Companion to the Temple*; by reading of which the Devotions of the People may be very much excited and improved; which is such an advantage as the words of extempore Prayer will not admit of.

2. Another advantage peculiar to publick Forms, is, That in joining with them the People may pray with more understanding, than they can well be supposed to do in conceiv'd and extempore Prayer, wherein generally the Minister is forc'd to make use of such words and expressions as come first to hand, having not leisure enough to pick and choose his words, without making long and undecent pauses and interruptions, so that sometimes he is fain to use a hard word, which perhaps not half the People understand, because an easier doth not come to his mind, and sometimes to intangle his expressions with long Parentheses, sometimes to darken his matter with far fetch'd Metaphors, or to express it by halves in broken Sentences, and sometimes to run out his Periods to an inordinate length, by which the sense of them is very much clouded and obscur'd: these and such like inconveniences all the World knows do very commonly attend extempore Effusions: and let a mans fancy and tongue be never so fluent and voluble, he can never be so secure of expressing himself intelligibly to the People when he
prays

prays extempore, as he might be if he took time enough before-hand to choose his words, and form his expressions, so that the People may be much more secure of understanding what they pray for when they joyn with a Form, than when they joyn with an extempore Prayer; for to be sure in composing publick Forms more care will be taken of the phrase, that the words may fit the matter, and express it intelligibly to the People, than there can be in extempore Prayer; which admits of no long consideration, no alteration upon second thoughts, no after-scanning or revisal, as Forms of Prayer do, but it must pass as it happens, whether it be intelligible or no, by reason of which those who *occupy the room of the unlearned*, are many times forc'd to break off praying for want of understanding what the words and expressions of the Prayer mean; for whether the Prayer be spoken *in an unknown Tongue*, or in words that are unintelligible to the People, it is all one to them, for still their *understanding is unfruitful*, and so long their devotion must be broken and interrupted.

3. Another advantage peculiar to publick Forms, is, That the People may joyn with them with much more faith and assurance, than they can with extempore Prayers; it must doubtless be of great advantage to a mans devotion in publick, to be satisfied before-hand that the matter he is to pray for is good and acceptable to God; for by this means he will be enabled to pray on with a stronger faith and surer hope of being heard and accepted; but this a man can never be satisfi'd of aforehand, that joyns in extempore Prayer, unless he hath an implicit faith in his Minister, that he will say nothing to God but what is true, nor ask any thing of him but what is lawful; which how he can certainly depend on, I cannot imagin, especially considering

sidering that the Minister who prays is many times a stranger to him, both as to his person and principles, and for all that he knows may be very erroneous, rash, and unadvised, or very ignorant of what is matter of Prayer, and what not; And even those Ministers whom he knows, and can best confide in, are not always so very sure of their hands, but that some times they may mistake their passion for their zeal, and reack their anger or faction in their Prayers, or in the heat and hurry of speaking what comes next, let drop an error before they are aware, or express themselves so doubtfully, or unadvisedly, that an honest and discerning mind may not be able to joyn with him; so that in joyning with an extempore Prayer, it is very necessary, (as hath been observed by an excellent Divine upon this Argument) that as we go along with the Minister, we should judge of what he saith before our hearts consent to it, and if it should so happen, that by reason of the novelty, or ambiguity, affectation, or indigestedness of his expressions, or any such rub in our way, we cannot readily judge, but are fain to hesitate, and deliberate upon this, or that passage; in the mean time he who prays is gone on, and now upon a new subject, and we are left behind, and at a loss, and perhaps miserably confounded before our Devotion can close in again, and no sooner it may be is it well fixt, but 'tis led away again into the same inconveniency and maze: all which may be easily prevented by the use of publick Forms; of the matter and expressions of which, the People may easily satisfy themselves aforehand, and when this is done, they will have nothing else to do, but to pray and keep their holy affections a going, they will have no new Judgment to make of what is said, no doubtful phrase or matter to examin, and their judgment being satisfied before

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they begin to pray, with the words and matter of the Prayer, their devotion may go on with it, without pause or stop in an even and uninterrupted current.

4. Another advantage peculiar to publick Forms, is, That they have much less in them to divert the affections of the People from the matter of Prayer. For as for extempore Prayer, it is very apt to disturb the devotion of the People, whether it be well or ill perform'd, if he who performs it hesitates, or blunders, or expresses himself in crude, undecent, or fantastick phrases, instead of attending to the matter, and joyning their affections with it, they will in all probability be pitying, or contemning him, carping at what comes next, and running descants on his weakness and impertinence; if he perform well, and his method be orderly and artificial, his matter good, and his expressions fluent and apt, and easie, they will in all probability be admiring his parts, and entertaining their curiosity with the elegance of his phrase, the solidity and promptness of his judgment, and the art and finery of his composition; either of which must very much divert and call off their affections from the matter; whereas while they are joyning in publick Forms, to which they have been accustomed, and in which neither the strength, nor weakness of the Ministers parts appears, they have none of all these snares to intangle their devotion: for being used to the words, and phrase, and method, they have no temptation to concern their minds any farther about them, than as they convey the matter of the Prayer to them, and having none of the above-named diversions, to carry away their minds from the matter, they may doubtless, if they please, attend to it with much more fervour and affection.

5. Another peculiar advantage to the Peoples Devotion in joyning with publick Forms, is, That they are more secur'd as to the decency and solemnity of their publick Worship ; and I suppose there is no body will question, but that the decent and solemn performance of publick Worship, is highly advantageous to the Devotion of the People. But now whilst they joyn in extempore Prayers, the decency and solemnity of the performance, doth altogether depend upon the ability and present disposèdness of the Minister ; so that if the Minister happen to be a man of a mean elocution, of an unready memory, or an unfruitful invention, it is impossible the Office should be perform'd with that decency and solemnity, that is necessary to affect the minds, and excite the devotions of the People ; yea, instead of that perhaps, the wretched dulness, the blundering, confusion, and impertinence of the performance, may turn their devotion into scorn and laughter ; for of this I have seen too many sad experiments : but suppose the Minister be a man of pregnant parts, and ready invention and elocution, yea and of great Piety and Devotion too, yet 'tis possible he may be frequently liable to great indispositions of body, and mind, to dulness, and inadvertency, to wandering, and distraction of thoughts, to deficiencies of invention, and failures of memory, and incumbrances of mind, with outward cares and accidents ; and if he be, what remedy is there, but that he must many times pray confusedly, and omit a great deal of the matter of Prayer, and utter a great deal of it in broken or undecent expressions ? and how can he avoid being sometimes at a loss, both for words and matter, and being forc'd to supply the present defects of his invention, with fustome repetitions of what went before ? and how is it possible almost but that a great deal of flat and empty nonsense, a great many

crude and undigested conceptions, and rash and unadvis'd expressions should escape from his lips before he is aware? and this, if he hath any grain of modesty in him, must, upon the least reflection, put him into a greater confusion, and so amaze, and bewilder him, that throughout the whole Prayer perhaps, he will hardly be able to recover himself to any consistency of thoughts: Now is it not a hard case, that the decency and solemnity of the publick Prayers of a Congregation, should depend upon the uncertain and variable temper and disposition of one single person; so as that if he happen to be indispos'd or disorder'd in his body or mind, the Devotions of 500 or 1000 persons must partake of his disorders and distractions; for how much soever he is indisposed, their Prayer can be no better than what he is able to pour out extempore, and how flatly, unadvisedly or confusedly soever he prays, they must pray after him, or not pray at all; which vast inconvenience is wholly cur'd and prevented, by a well compos'd Form of Prayer, for how weak soever the Ministers parts be, or how much soever he may be at present indisposed, if he can but read distinctly and seriously, the Devotion of the People will not be at all affected or influenc'd by it, for whatsoever his parts, or present temper be, they will be sure to find an orderly and methodical Prayer to joyn with; a Prayer that is comprehensive of all their common cases and necessities; that is sober and good, mature and well advis'd as to the matter; that is full and plain and decent as to the phrase and expression of it; and in a word, that is every way suited to all the parts and ends and offices of publick Devotion; And if they please, they may satisfy themselves before-hand, that there is nothing in the Prayer they are to joyn with, but what becomes publick Worship, which is the most serious and solemn thing in the World.

6. Another peculiar advantage of publick Forms, is, That in joyning with them the People may be better secur'd of the reality and sincerity of their own Devotion. For in joyning with extempore Prayers, there is no doubt but they may, and many times do mistake the tickling of their fancies, for true and sincere Devotion; for their fancies being surpriz'd, and amused, meerly by the novelty of the expressions, will naturally influence their sensitive passions, and chase them into such warmths as an undiscerning judgment may easily mistake for the holy fervours of Devotions; they find themselves strangely heated in the Prayer, and upon that immediately conclude, that they are wonderfully devout, without ever enquiring, whether it be the matter, or the phrase and expression that heats them; and so from those transports of passion, which are meerly the effects of new and surprising words, striking briskly on their fancies, they many times take occasion to flatter themselves into a great opinion of their Piety and Godliness, whereas many of these persons are notoriously immoral in their lives, and utterly disaffected to the matter they pray for with so much seeming earnestness and affection; which is a plain argument, that their affection is not to the matter, but meerly to the words and expressions; and in all probability the same surprisings of expression would have as much affected them at a Play, as it doth at a Prayer: thus for instance, when they hear God or Christ spoken of, and their goodness and perfections represented in a new and surprising strain of expressions, their fancy many times is strangely smitten with it, and this makes their spirits flow in a sweet and placid torrent to their heart; and by their frisking about it, to sooth and tickle it into great complacency and pleasure, till at last it opens and dilates it orifices, and the grateful flood breaks in, and drowns

drowns it in delight and ravishment ; and yet all this many times, instead of being a real complacency of their souls in God, is only a complacency of their fancies in the phrase by which he is described and represented, and had they heard the Hero of Play describ'd in the same phrase, they might probably have been moved to the same affection to him, as they are now to God and their Saviour ; for the same kind of influence that new and surprising expressions have upon mens fancies in Prayer, they will have when applied to other matters ; And if we will believe *Plutarch*, it was an ordinary thing with the *Greek* Sophists, by their honied words, surprising phrases, singing tones, and effeminate accents, to excite their Auditors into a kind of Bacchical Enthusiasm ; and no doubt but those hearers, of whom he there speaks, who were wont to applaud their Orators at the end of their Declamations with a *θεῖος, θεοειδής, δεσποτικός, ἀπερίττος*, divinely, heavenly, unimitably spoken ; found themselves as much moved, as many a man doth at an extempore Prayer, who yet verily believes, that it is not merely a movement of his fancy, but of his sincere and true devotion. This therefore is a great disadvantage of extempore Prayer in publick, that merely by amusing the fancies of the people with the surprising novelty of its expressions, it puts them into fits of counterfeit devotion, and makes them many times imagin that they are heartily affected with the matter of the Prayers, when 'tis merely the phrase of it that by striking on their fancies, moves their sensitive affection. But whether this movement of affection be fancy, or devotion, a man may much more easily distinguish when he joyns with a Form, than when he joyns with an extempore Prayer ; for he being acquainted aforehand with the phrases and expressions of the Form, it is not to be supposed, that they should much surprise

surprise and amuse his fancy, and therefore if notwithstanding that, he finds himself heartily affected in the Prayer, he may much more securely conclude, that it is the matter, and not meerly the words that moves and affects him. And thus, with all plainness and sincerity, I have indeavoured to represent those peculiar advantages which Forms of Prayer have above extempore ones, as to the quickening and improving the Devotions of the People: I might have given other Instances of it, but these I think are sufficient to determin the case in debate, and to convince any unprejudic'd man, that pious and well compos'd Forms, are so far from deadening the publick Devotions, that they contribute sundry great advantages to it. And indeed if publick Forms do deaden the Peoples Devotion, it must be either as they always confine the Devotions of the People to the same set of words, which, as I have proved at large, is a great advantage to their Devotion; or as they do *pro tempore* confine them to a certain set of words; in which sense the Ministers extempore Prayer is a Form to the People, and doth as much confine their Devotions to a certain set of words, *pro tempore*, as any stated Form whatsoever.

And now, if after all this, it be objected by our Brethren, that they find by Experience, which is the best Argument, that Forms do actually deaden their Devotion, I would beseech them seriously to consider, whether this experience of theirs be not founded in an unreasonable prejudice; and if it be, whether it's fit that their unreasonable prejudice should prescribe to the whole Church? it's certain, that there are other men as truly pious and devout as they, who find by experience, that joyning with the publick Forms is a great advantage to their Devotion; so that here is experience against experience; and certainly where there are two
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contrary experiences of the same thing, they cannot both proceed from the nature of the thing; but one, or t'other must necessarily arise from the disposition and temper of those who are conversant about it: Now I have shew'd that Forms of Prayer are in themselves real advantages to publick Devotion, and that they are so, there are many thousands of good Christians can attest by their own experience; and therefore if our Brethren do not experience the same, the fault must lie in their own prejudice, or temper, and there is no doubt to be made, but would they heartily endeavour to cure their own prejudice, and to dispossess their minds of those groundless Piques they have entertain'd against our Liturgy; would they but peruse it with impartial eyes; consider the contents, and labour to affect their minds with the sense and matter of it; they would quickly find the same experience of its advantageousness to publick Devotion, as those blessed Martyrs did who compos'd it, us'd, and at last died for it, and valued every Leaf of it as an inestimable treasure; and as we should consent in our experience, so we should also in our communion, and with one heart and one mouth glorifie our Father together.

F I N I S.

